

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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SUBJECT: MINISTER ANZUETO APPEARS BEFORE CONGRESS

REF: A. GUATEMALA 5534 B. A-169

SUMMARY: CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE FOLLOWING THE APPEARANCE OF COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER SERVES TO POINT UP STRUGGLE IN PRESENT PARTY ALIGNMENTS, AT LEAST UNTIL PRESIDENT LAUGERUD DECIDES THROUGH WHICH PARTY HE WISHES TO WORK. FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, ANZUETO APPEARS LIKELY TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE.

1. MEMBERS OF CONGRESS VOTED OCTOBER 7 TO SUMMON MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC WORKS GUSTAVO ANZUETO VIELMAN TO TESTIFY REGARDING ALLEGED CORRUPTION RELATED TO PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS. REFS A AND B.

2. ANZUETO APPEARED OCTOBER 9 TO ANSWER QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED. QUESTIONS CENTERED NOT ON COST OVERRUNS, BUT ON APPARENT VIOLATION OF LAW REQUIRING PURCHASE OF TWO GENERATING STATIONS.

3. EFFORT TO SUMMON ANZUETO TO TESTIFY HAD BEEN SPEAR-HEADED BY PR DEPUTIES, ESPECIALLY REP. JOSE CRUZ SALAZAR.

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4. ANZEUTO'S RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM PR MEMBERS
CRUZ SALAZAR, YURRITA CUESTA, AND TELLEZ GARCIA WERE
TURGID, LONG, AND NOT VERY ENLIGHTENING.

5. CRITICAL PART OF THE PROCESS WAS DEBATE FOLLOWING
QUESTIONING AND MINISTER'S DEPARTURE. AT THE START OF
DEBATE, DCG LEADER DANILO BARILLAS ACCUSED THE MLN OF
"UNDERLYING POLITICAL MOTIVES," AND THE ENTIRE DCG
BLOC WALKED OUT. PR LEADER CRUZ SALAZAR THEN
ANNOUNCED THAT THE PR WOULD NOT SEEK A VOTE OF NO
CONFIDENCE, STATING THAT PR MEMBERS WERE SATISFIED THEY
HAD PROVED THE COMMISSION OF ERROR. WITH THE DCG
MEMBERS GONE, THE PR WOULD HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO
REQUEST A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE, BECAUSE THEY
WERE A VOTE SHORT OF THE NUMBER CONSTITUTIONALLY REQUIRED
FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF A MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE.

6. TWO GOVERNMENT COALITION PARTIES, CAO AND PID, CAME
OUT IN FAVOR OF ANZUETO, BUT THE MLN REMAINED SILENT
THROUGH VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE AFFAIR. AFTER THE DCG
WALKOUT, THE MLN SPOKESMAN WOULD ONLY CHARACTERIZE THE
DAY'S EVENTS AS A GREAT "CIVIC ACT.". NONE OF THE
COALITION PARTIES PROPOSED A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE.
THE DAY AFTER ANZUETO APPEARED AT CONGRESS,
LAUGERUD ANNOUNCED THAT ANZEUTO HAD HIS FULL BACKING.

7. COMMENT: THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT THE
OUTCOME OF THE ANZUETO AFFAIR WAS THE
ALIGNMENT OF PARTIES THAT RESULTED. THE MLN, WHICH HAD
VOTED IN FAVOR OF CALLING ANZUETO TO TESTIFY,
FAILED TO COME OUT IN FAVOR OF ANZUETO ON THE FLOOR,
AND THEREBY EFFECTIVELY SIDED WITH THE OPPOSITION PR
MEMBERS. BY WALKING OUT, THE DCG MADE ANY MOTION
FOR A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IMPOSSIBLE, AND THEREBY
EFFECTIVELY SIDED WITH THE CAO AND PID, BOTH GOVERNMENT
COALITION PARTIES.

8. WHY THE APPARENT SWITCHES? THE DCG, WHICH HAS
REPORTEDLY BEEN HOPEFUL OF MAKING SOME FORM OF
POLITICAL "ARRANGEMENT" WITH PRESIDENT LAUGERUD, MAY
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NOT HAVE WISHED TO JEOPARDIZE ITS CHANCES BY AIDING THE
MLN. OTTO FERNANDEZ, AN MLN CONGRESSMAN, TOLD AN EMBOFF
LAST WEEK THAT MLN LEADER MARIO SANDOVAL HAD PERSONAL MOTIVES FOR
SEEKING ANZUETO'S REMOVAL. THE DAY AFTER THE
INTERPELLATION, FERNANDEZ PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED
THAT PERSONAL REASONS LAY BEHIND THE MLN'S FAILURE TO
SUPPORT ANZUETO. THE DCG PROBABLY DID NOT WANT TO
DO ANYTHING TO AID MARIO SANDOVAL WORK OUT HIS

GRUDGE AGAINST ANZETO.

9. ANOTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE DCG WALKOUT MAY HAVE BEEN THE DCG FEAR THAT THE MLN WAS SEEKING TO USE DCG VOTES TO GET A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE ON THE FLOOR, AND THEN COME TO THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESCUE BY VOTING AGAINST THE MOTION.

10. WHICHEVER THEORY IS CORRECT, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE DCG FELT IT STOOD TO LOSE BY VOTING EITHER FOR OR AGAINST A NO CONFIDENCE RESOLUTION. THE DCG'S DESIRE TO RETAIN MANEUVERING ROOM SERVES TO POINT UP THE FACT THAT UNTIL THE PRESIDENT DECIDES WHICH PARTY, IF ANY, HE WILL ALIGN HIMSELF WITH, THE ALIGNMENTS AMONG POLITICAL PARTIES WILL REMAIN RATHER FLUID.

11. ANZETO APPEARS TO HAVE WEATHERED THE STORM, AND UNLESS HE DECIDES TO RESIGN IN A FIT OF PIQUE, HE WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE FOR AT LEAST THE TIME BEING. SINCE AN ABRUPT RESIGNATION WOULD PLAY INTO MARIO SANDOVAL'S HANDS AS EFFECTIVELY AS THE VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE, WE DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY.
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